

# Keeping You Posted

Newsletter of the United Church of Christ

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## UCC Bodies Target Issues Expected to Go to Congress

UCC national bodies are keeping an eye on a number of justice and peace issues expected to be addressed in Congress this year.

Cutting aid to Nicaraguan contras is high on church watchdog lists, says Jay Lintner, Office for Church in Society Washington, DC director. The remaining \$40 million of \$100 million in contra aid approved in 1986 is set to be released around Feb. 15. The Administration has asked for \$105 million for the contras in fiscal 1988.

On other Central American issues, the Office advocates cuts in military and economic support to El Salvador, reduction of the U.S. military presence in Honduras, no military aid to Guatemala and support for the Contadora peace process.

At the helm of domestic issues is the Federal budget. OCIS will again lobby for military cuts, Mr. Lintner reports. With a \$108 billion 1988 Gramm-Rudman deficit target, domestic programs cannot be funded unless military spending is reduced, he says.

Domestic programs affecting children also are being watched closely.

OCIS and UC Board for Homeland Ministries want Aid to Families With Dependent Children to be extended to include two-parent families. Currently, many spouses are forced to leave for the family to get aid, a factor contributing to the breakup of homes. In addition, OCIS is pushing for expansion of the special supplemental food program for women, infants and children (WIC), improved benefits for food stamp recipients, school lunch and breakfast programs and funding for childcare facilities.

OCIS and UCBHM advocate price supports for farmers and a minimum wage increase that reflects the consumer price index.

Church agencies also are watching legislation on arms control, "Star Wars," chemical weapons and the Civil Rights Restoration Act, as well as aid to the Philippines, South Africa's neighbor nations and the United Nations, now under serious attack.

## St. Louis Proposed as UCC HQ

The St. Louis metropolitan area has been recommended as new headquarters for the UCC.

The national offices have been based in New York City since 1963. In making its announcement Jan. 16, the committee charged with proposing a site eliminated New York and Cleveland to choose St. Louis. Earlier, it also had considered Indianapolis and Chicago.

Reasons for recommending St. Louis, the committee explained, are its geographic centrality in the U.S., cost of living and of doing business, the presence of a variety of UCC congregations and institutions there and expected future growth of the church to the South and West. Committee members called it a "progressive city with vision and energy."

Next step in the selection process is a vote by the Executive Council during its Mar. 11-15 meeting. The final decision will be made by General Synod, meeting June 25-30.

Headquarters are defined as the location of the church's officers, but it is hoped that if they relocate, other national units of the church will do so as well. The committee is recommending that the officers move in 1989 or as soon as possible thereafter, when the 105 Madison Ave. lease runs out.

The recommendation means both the UCC and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may have national headquarters in Missouri. The Presbyterian location committee has proposed that the denomination's June General Assembly adopt Kansas City as its headquarters site.

## HUMAN RIGHTS TOUR Overseas Leaders to Visit Conferences

Religious leaders active in human rights from six trouble spots around the world will begin arriving in the U.S. this month to speak in local UCC churches.

Altogether, 12 people will come, from mid-Feb. through June, and will be shared among 23 conferences, according to Kenneth

R. Ziebell, associate world issues secretary with UC Board for World Ministries. Each visitor is expected to stay for a month and spend two weeks in each conference visited.

They will come from South Korea, the Philippines, Chile, Nicaragua, South Africa and the West Bank.

Purpose of the visits is to underline "the inseparable link between peace and justice, a point that is very important to our partner churches," Mr. Ziebell explains.

"Because the violation of human rights anywhere becomes a threat to peace throughout the world," he says, "it is essential that UCC members have firsthand contact with people from nations where such violations are the order of the day."

Funded through the UCC's Family Thank Offering, the tour is sponsored by the World Board and Office for Church in Society. It is part of the same project, "Working With World Partners for Justice, Human Rights and Peace," that last fall sent fact-finding teams of UCC members to Chile, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Philippines.

In this tour, conferences are responsible for individual church assignments.



Religious News Service

**Guard grips South African youth protesting apartheid. Family Thank Offering funds will bring religious leaders from six countries in crisis to UCC churches for talks on ways to end such human rights abuses.**

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# The World Sets the Agenda

By Max Hale

In the once-popular television show, "The Incredible Hulk," David Banner is a young man who undergoes a transformation when subjected to extreme stress. His body actually changes from a rather ordinary physique to a huge muscular giant of a man who, unlike his mild-mannered other self, communicates primarily through force. Banner is aware and troubled by this uncontrollable transformation and is searching for a cure, hence the ongoing story line.

In one episode, Banner falls in love with a doctor who herself has a fatal disease and has but a short time to live. When David proposes marriage, she answers that they don't have enough time. He tells this story: Once upon a time, a man was being chased by a tiger. He jumped from the edge of a cliff to escape and, on his way down, reached out

and grabbed onto a bush. While hanging there, he looked down and saw another tiger waiting for him at the bottom. He felt the roots on the bush begin to weaken and, at that moment, noticed a wild strawberry growing out of a crevice in the rock. With one hand, he reached out, picked and ate the strawberry and said to himself, "Now, there's a delicious strawberry."

There's something to be said for a faith that allows one to celebrate the good in the midst of crisis. For many of us, the tigers that precipitate our crises masquerade as loneliness, alienation, grief or such. One wild, delicious strawberry, figuratively speaking, is not going to resolve the trauma; but then, that is not the point. I think that, more often than we care to admit, we find ourselves in situations not of our choosing and often feel help-

less to do anything about it. Having the presence of mind, the courage and the inner peace to enjoy that wild strawberry may literally be the only thing holding our world together.

The church has the right, nay, the responsibility to enter life at all levels, from personal witnessing of the faith, to political strategizing to labor for peace, justice and reconciliation. But it is the world, with its joy and pain, its accomplishments and defeats, its loneliness and community, its tension and peace, that sets the agenda. Our mission, should we agree to accept it, is to make truth dependable and love routine—to discover, taste and, whenever possible, share the wild strawberries.

The tigers are real, but so are the strawberries. The church of tomorrow, of whatever vintage, geography or ethnic makeup, is called to be in the thick of things, judging, nurturing, reconciling and healing. Anyone who has been chased by tigers knows it's not all that easy; but God loves us and life matters and that, it seems to me, is a good place to begin.

*Max Hale is the organizing pastor of Sierra Meadows UCC in Reno, NV.*

## Priorities Report

### Youth/Young Adult Ministries

Bruce Morrison of First Congregational UCC, New London, WI, fashioned a confirmation curriculum around "creation-centered spirituality." Keeping the agenda "very loose" and requiring students to "help create their own experience," he combined such sources as the Bible, quotations from medieval mystics, a modern text on global civilization and "art as meditation, using primarily clay, which I believe to be the most analogous substance to our relationship with God." This type of teaching, he says, takes "creativity and a willingness to take risks and go against the grain of accepted teaching."

Each year, several visiting groups of UCC youth use Philadelphia's Old First Reformed Church as a base for urban work camp experiences. While staying at the church, the youth work in shelters and soup kitchens and learn about poverty and homelessness in Philadelphia. Among last year's visitors were groups from UCC congregations in Norwell, MA; Madison, WI; Perkasi, PA, and Sylva, OH. For similar opportunities, request "service project listings" from Carl Bade, UC Board for Homeland Ministries, 132 W. 31 St., New York, NY 10001, 212-239-8700.

### Family Life

A support group in Westchester County, NY for people who have experienced infertility, miscarriage or stillbirth heard a message of encouragement in a worship service designed and led by local UCC minister Libby Dodd. Using the theme "A Celebration of Creativity," the service included music, scripture, meditation and a sermon in which Ms. Dodd

focused on a text from Genesis and shared her thoughts on "who God is, what creativity means and what that says about people who are unable to bear children."

### Justice and Peace

Members of the Christian social justice committee at First Congregational UCC, Stockton, CA, have pledged \$1.48 each to the World Court as their portion of the \$320.2 million the U.S. was ordered to pay for illegal use of force against Nicaragua. They divided the total fine—which the U.S. vetoed in the United Nations Security Council—by the U.S. population to arrive at \$1.48.

The "Peacemakers" group at First United Church of Oak Park, IL is compiling "Lenten Prayers for Peace" for a photocopy booklet. Forty-one of the church's members and one church school class contributed prayers to last year's Lenten book.

### Spiritual Renewal

Wanting to learn more about spirituality in a shared experience, the five-member women's support group at Norwich (NY) UCC recently conceived and organized a weekend retreat that drew 14 of the church's women. Led by Ann Mallouk, director of Garden City (NY) Community Church's family life center, the women engaged in a variety of meditative exercises, including reflection on Bible passages and on significant events and people in their lives. "It was a time of renewal for people who already knew each other superficially, but who ended up sharing in a unique way," says Belinda Fiorilli, interim pastor of Sherburne (NY) UCC, who helped lead the retreat.

## OPPOSING VIEW

*Rolland Emerson Wolfe, Harkness professor of biblical literature emeritus at Case Western Reserve University, writes:*

Marion Fitkin's evidence in "Mary, A True Disciple" (Dec. KYP) is based on the birth stories and John's Gospel, which portrays the life of Jesus as it should have been rather than as it was. In contrast, the three Synoptic Gospels, which give the true picture of Jesus' ministry, do not have a single good word for Mary.

Jesus' visit to Nazareth in Luke 4:16-30, for example, is most revealing. Apparently Mary and the brothers and sisters felt so disgraced by his return there that none of them even went with him to the synagogue. He tragically summed up the visit: "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own relatives, and in his own house" (Mark 6:4).

Such observations show the historical Mary was not a "true disciple"; she is perhaps the most disappointing person in the Bible. She had a matchless opportunity. But she failed to respond.

## PERSONNEL CHANGE

UCC minister WAYNE L. OWENS, a former community affairs manager with General Electric in Philadelphia, began work Jan. 1 as corporate social responsibility officer for the Pension Boards, UC Board for Homeland Ministries and United Church Foundation. He helps articulate issues and implement corporate responsibility actions.

## UCC FINANCIAL REPORTING Budget Gets More Comprehensive

With a new UCC "comprehensive financial statement," the church has taken a step toward centralizing national financial details that always have been available from diverse sources.

The new statement, drawn from the annual budget audit of each national UCC body, includes condensed information on each's assets, liabilities, income and expenditures. The first such annual statement has gone to the Executive Council and will be among documents given to General Synod delegates this year, says Charles Lockyear, UCC director of finance/treasurer.

The document reflects a recommendation in the UCC Constitution and Bylaws. Paragraph 191 asks the UCC director of finance to collaborate with instrumentality treasurers to "formulate effective uniform financial policies and practices and to assemble financial facts and data from which to prepare and maintain a comprehensive financial statement of the church and all of its instrumentalities."

Mr. Lockyear, UCC treasurer since 1961, says the difficulty all along in creating a comprehensive statement—and the condensed nature of the new statement—are due to the UCC's structure, with each national body using its own budgeting and accounting methods. To get detailed information about where money comes from and how it is spent, one must seek it from each instrumentality.

Connecticut Conference minister Carroll Kann, who belonged to the budget process committee that designed the new statement, hopes a method can be developed to make central reporting even more comprehensive.

Mr. Kann would like to see a statement with a "common chart of accounts," in which each national body follows a standard budget format, and with "functional reporting" that tells how the money on each line is used. He admits it would take much time and effort to design such a framework, but says it would be worthwhile to enable people to "see in one booklet where the OCWM [Our Church's Wider Mission] dollar comes from and where it's spent."

For now, as always, all national bodies will answer budget inquiries. For instance, at UC Board for World Ministries, treasurer Myles Walburn says a mission division budget—which Mr. Kann considers a good example of "functional reporting"—is available to anyone who asks. So is detailed financial information about UC Board for Homeland Ministries, where administration secretary Nils Forstner says he and treasurer Richard Dubie get frequent budget-related inquiries.

## Survey Finds Baby Boomers Are Coming Back to Church

The generation that spurned institutional religion during the 1960's is coming back to church, according to a recent study by two researchers at UCC-related Hartford (CT) Seminary.

The study by William McKinney and David Roozen concentrated on people now between ages 31 and 41, part of the "baby boom" generation born between 1945 and 1965.

Using public opinion polls, they found that 42.8% of the baby boomers responding in 1984 attended worship at least three times a month. Only 33.5% of them reported this attendance level between 1972 and 1974.

The increase of nearly 10% came during a period of general nationwide decline in worship attendance. The rise primarily involved people who used to go to church only several times a year and now go regularly. For the most part, people who previously were away from church altogether are staying away, the researchers report.

Though baby boomers are now having children of their own, and it's a big reason for their increased church attendance, it's not the only reason why the UCC should want to attract them, Dr. McKinney says. He feels the UCC "has a lot in common with the values of this generation," including concern about issues of justice and peace and an openness toward individual struggles about what is moral and what is not.

R. Alan Johnson, secretary for evangelism and membership growth with UC Board for Homeland Ministries, says five factors seem to attract members of the baby boom generation to churches:

\*Worship experiences, including good music and preaching that is relevant to daily life and rooted in the Bible.

\*Nurseries. "They have waited a long time to get married and have children, and they're not going to leave their kid in some dusty little corner."

\*Programs that "help people grow spiritually, rediscover life's meaning and understand what that means in today's world."

\*Being welcomed into "a church community, a place of connectedness, which seeks to make a difference in the world."

\*A climate that strengthens family life while also being open to young people who are single or are living together in various forms of commitment.

### The Winters: The Kids Asked So Many Questions

Kem and Gerald Winter drew away from religion while in college. Two years ago, when they turned 30 and 31, they joined St. John UCC, Freeport, IL.

"The children asked so many questions," reports Mrs. Winter, "especially about Christmas and Easter. We felt we had to provide adequate answers."

The couple also felt that society and the world needed help, but did not know what they could do about it. "The church gave direction to our energy," they say.

What was gained went further than the Winters' original reasons for attending church, however. Note the couple: "We as a family are firmly bonded together because of our participation in St. John's."

## Interest Groups Work on Placement

UCC special interest groups rely heavily on informal networks to help get their constituents placed as local pastors.

The Network for UCC Clergywomen is compiling data sheets for members on each conference and association's placement system. Along with the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society, the group also raises UCC consciousness about clergywomen's gifts.

Pacific and Asian-American Ministries' quarterly newsletter lists pastoral vacancies, but other ethnic caucuses deal with placement regionally. In addition to word-of-mouth announcements, Ministers for Racial and Social Justice's New York affiliate tries to keep at least one member on the area ordination and standing committee as a voice for African-American clergy and churches. With more ministers than churches, the Council for Hispanic Ministries looks to church start-ups

for placements. More than two million Hispanics live in the Northeast, yet the area has fewer than 10 Hispanic UCC parishes.

While not a special interest group, the Council for American Indian Ministry is recruiting and training potential pastors, since lay leaders now serve Indian churches.

The Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns gives moral support to ordination candidates and uses the UCC's affirmative action network. None of the four people openly lesbian/gay when ordained works in parishes.

Churches seeking more conservative or evangelical pastors often contact the Biblical Witness Fellowship for names, then approach UCC conferences or associations for profiles. Likewise, the Fellowship of Charismatic Christians helps churches and pastors with this emphasis to get together, then directs them to the regional church to complete the placement process.

## WOMEN PRAY

# New Book Gathers Prayers From UCC

A new book of 45 prayers by UCC women has been released by Pilgrim Press.

Edited by Office for Church Life and Leadership associate Karen L. Roller, *Women Pray* contains prayers sent to the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society. The 87-page paperback allows women "to share their prayers as gifts to one another and the larger faith community," explains CCW coordinator Marilyn M. Breitling.

Written in inclusive language, the prayers in the book range from public litanies for peace and justice in the world to an 18-year-old's private thanksgiving for help during a rough spot in her life.

*Women Pray* is \$3.95 from Pilgrim Press, 132 W. 31 St., New York, NY 10001.

## RECOMMENDED

In LINE BY LINE, a 1 hr. video cassette produced by the UCC Pension Boards, tax expert Manfred Holck, Jr. takes pastors on an in-depth expedition through the 1986 1040 form. Notes changes that will occur when the Tax Reform Act begins to take effect with 1987 taxes. Available from conference offices.

THE BIBLE: AN OWNER'S MANUAL, by Robert R. Hann, is designed for the adult who has never used or read the Bible. Text includes Protestant, Catholic, conservative and liberal views of how the Bible is interpreted. Contains a good explanation of the different English translations. \$5.95 from Paulist Press, 545 Island Rd., Ramsey, NJ 07446.

SEND NEWS stories, PHOTOS and OPPOSING VIEWS of 100 words or less to political or social stands taken in a particular article to KYP, Office of Communication, UCC, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.



Phil Groul

Farmers in the drought-stricken Southeast get hay from Midwestern counterparts in One Great Hour of Sharing-funded shipment. "Share the Joy," a filmstrip honoring Church World Service's 40th anniversary, is available from conference offices to promote the OGHS offering, suggested for Mar. 29.

## UC Scene

Clergy, as police chaplains, minister to both law enforcement officials and victims of crime, reports ROBERT H. SARGENT, pastor of the Congregational Church of Goffstown, NH and a volunteer chaplain. The more than 1,000 U.S. police chaplains counsel officers and help in such areas as death notifications, suicide prevention work and family violence cases. Part of his "job," Mr. Sargent notes, is attending weekly staff meetings and thereby providing "community feedback and a different perspective" on police work. To get involved, write International Conference of Police Chaplains, Rt. 5, Box 310, Livingston, TX 77351.

## Pastors Offered Free Florida Vacation Home

Thanks to a veteran who feels pastors are overworked and underpaid, a vacation home is available free for clergy who want to spend two weeks in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

Two three-bedroom houses—fully furnished except for phone—are open year-round to full-time pastors and their families. Donor is Hugh Hoffman, founder of Religious Vacations, Inc., 524 N.E. 16 Ct., 33305, 305-763-8400. Those who go, says the Florida Conference, will find a warm welcome at First Congregational UCC, 2501 N.E. 30 St.

## JOB OPPORTUNITY

PASTORAL THEOLOGY PROFESSOR is sought by Lancaster Theological Seminary. Successful candidate must have a Ph.D. degree, ordination and demonstrated expertise in pastoral counseling for the tenure-track position to begin Sept. 1. Applicants should be sensitive to students of various backgrounds. Send letter by Mar. 6 to Peter Schmichen, president, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, PA 17603.

## UCBHM Produces Updated C.O. Packet

UC Board for Homeland Ministries has a packet for people exploring conscientious objection as a response to a draft or war.

Aimed at people ages 16-23, the packet may also interest people up to 36, who could be drafted in some instances, says Gordon Svoboda II, UCBHM's secretary for young adult education and ministries resources. The packet, updated periodically, was issued last in 1982. Since then, computerization has cut the time needed to issue draft notices in case of war, so early C.O. preparation is more urgent than ever, says Russ Claussen of the Office for Church in Society, who helped prepare the packet.

Order the packet from Mr. Svoboda at UCBHM, 132 W. 31 St., New York, NY 10001 or Office for Church in Society, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. Cost: \$4.50.

## Lenten Witness for Central America Set

Ecumenical leaders have asked local churches to pray, fast and focus on the plight of Central America during Lent.

Presidents of participating denominations will start the Lenten witness with an Ash Wednesday (Mar. 4) worship service on the Capitol steps in Washington, DC. Capitol worship services will be held each Wednesday of Lent, with UCC and Disciples of Christ leaders officiating on Apr. 8.

The Office for Church in Society requests local churches to focus at least one Lenten worship service on the region—preferably during "Central America Week," Mar. 21-29—to fast on Good Friday and to talk with legislative representatives. Contact Gretchen Eick, OCIS, 110 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, DC 20002, 202-543-1517.

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